

PART VI

LIVESTOCK, DAIRYING AND POULTRY

General Importance

Since the earliest farm settlements, livestock and their products have played an important part of Snohomish County's agricultural economy. The dairy, beef cattle and poultry industry has developed to where it constitutes the primary farming activity of the county. On the lowlands of western Snohomish County, many of them diked or drained lands, are located some of the finest dairy and pasture lands of the state.

Census of Agriculture data indicate that in 1959 over 82 percent of all farm products sold, in terms of cash returns to Snohomish County farmers, was derived from livestock and livestock products. The value of all animals and their products marketed was \$8,345,001. Dairy products alone made up over 53 percent of the sales from commercial farms. Snohomish ranked second in 1959 among Washington counties in number of milk cows and in value of dairy products sold. In addition, the county's poultry industry ranked fifth in the number of chickens on farms and in volume of eggs sold. Finally, Snohomish was the fourth ranking county in the state in the value of all livestock and livestock products sold off the farm in 1959.

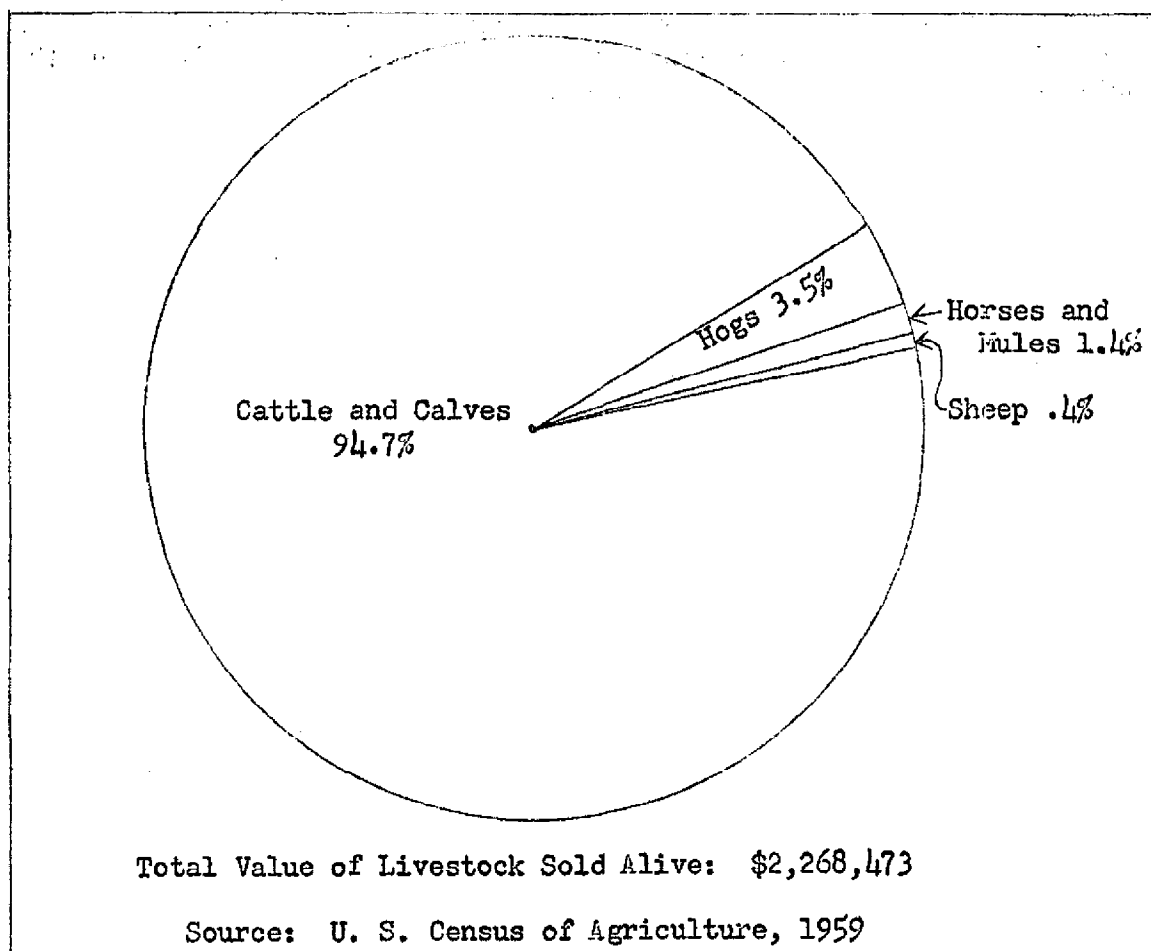


Figure 11. Value of Livestock Sold Alive
Snohomish County, 1959

Livestock Trends

Significant changes have occurred in the livestock farming of Snohomish County since 1940. The value of livestock and animal products sold increased from \$3,254,065 in 1940 to \$8,345,001 in 1959. There were net gains in beef and dairy cattle, chickens and sheep from 1940 to 1959. The turkey population increased until the mid-1950's but has dropped in more recent years. Hogs and horses have continued to decrease in numbers since the 1940's. Changes also occurred in the county's production of dairy and poultry products. Whole milk sales have increased over the years but the amount of cream sold off the farms has been reduced considerably. Egg sales off the farms have increased greatly since the late 1940's.

Cattle: Beef and Dairy Farming

Cattle, including both dairy and beef animals, are the most valuable component in Snohomish County agriculture. Dairy farms have continued to dominate the livestock enterprise. Dairying is well adapted to the climatic and topographic conditions of the county because dairy cows are efficient users of grass on semi-cropland, hilly slopes and poorly drained lowlands. In recent years, the number of beef cattle has greatly increased while the dairy cattle population has fluctuated within a rather narrow range from period to period. Improvements in quality and more efficient husbandry practices have been major factors contributing to the importance of cattle in Snohomish County agriculture.

Table 28. Livestock Numbers on Farms
Snohomish County, 1939-1963

Year	All Cattle (head)	Beef Cattle (head)	Dairy Cattle (head)
1939	39,300	1,200	38,100
1940	40,000	1,600	38,400
1941	41,600	800	40,800
1942	42,000	800	41,200
1943	42,100	900	41,200
1944	42,200	600	41,600
1945	42,900	1,000	41,900
1946	40,100	500	39,600
1947	39,800	200	38,600
1948	39,900	2,400	37,500
1949	40,000	2,300	37,700
1950	39,900	1,500	38,400
1951	39,000	3,400	35,600
1952	40,900	5,900	35,000
1953	47,000	10,500	36,500
1954	49,500	10,000	39,500
1955	52,100	11,600	40,500
1956	51,000	9,000	42,000
1957	44,000	3,600	40,400
1958	44,000	3,800	40,200
1959	45,000	5,900	39,100
1960	50,700	9,600	41,100
1961	56,500	12,700	43,800
1962	60,000	15,700	44,300
1963	61,000	19,300	41,700

Source: Statistical Reporting Service, U.S.D.A.

The number of cattle in Snohomish County in 1963 was more than double that of 1920. The Census of 1920 enumerated about 28,000 head as compared with the estimated figure of 61,000 in 1963. Between 1939 and 1945, the number of all cattle steadily increased from 39,300 to 42,900 head in the county. There was a slight decline during the immediate post-World War II period. From 1951 to 1955, the cattle population took an upward trend from around 39,000 to 52,000 head but dropped to 44,000 head by 1957. Since 1958, however, the all cattle figure has steadily increased from 44,000 to the all-time high of 61,000 head in 1963.

Over the years, there has been wider fluctuations in the beef cattle number than for dairy cattle. Beef cattle have numbered as few as 200 in 1947 and as many as 19,300 in 1963. The real gain in beef cattle numbers began after 1953 although there was a decline between 1955 and 1957. After 1957, the number steadily increased from 3,600 to 19,300 head in 1963. Beef raising gained popularity among numerous part-time farmers, largely because it requires less labor and investment than does dairying. High prices for beef also at times have encouraged beef farming in the county.

Dairying has been important in Snohomish County largely because of its marketing location and natural climatic conditions. Most of Snohomish County falls within the Seattle milkshed, a factor of great importance to the local dairy industry. Since 1939, the number of dairy cattle has ranged between 35,000 head in 1952 and 44,300 head in 1962. Dairy cattle increased in numbers during World War II and in more recent years. In 1963, dairy cattle totaled around 41,700 head, representing about 68 percent of all the cattle in the county.

Since 1920 the sale of whole milk from Snohomish County dairy farms has greatly increased while the selling of cream and farm butter has markedly decreased. Good market conditions during World War II gave a strong impetus to dairy products. The Census figures for 1944 recorded 136,268,505 pounds of whole milk being sold from dairy farms. Cream sales amounted to 116,821 pounds during the same year. Since then, cream sold off the farms has dropped to 14,650 pounds in 1959. Whole milk sales from farms also declined for a short period after World War II but has been on an upward trend since the late 1940's. Farms reporting sales of whole milk declined over 44 percent--from 1,809 in 1949 to 1,009 in 1959. Farms which sold cream numbered 290 in 1949 and in 1959 there were only 70. Dairy specialty farms which numbered 1,158 in 1950 dropped to 654 in 1959. Increasing costs in recent years have resulted in a trend toward fewer but larger, more efficient dairy operations. In 1959, there were 563 farms with over 10 milk cows, and of these, 78 farms had 50 or more head.

Table 29. Dairy Products Sold From Farms
Snohomish County, 1945-1959

Year	Any Milk or Cream Sold	Whole Milk Sold	Butterfat in Cream Sold
	Dollars	Pounds	Pounds
1945	No Data	136,268,505	116,821
1949	\$5,291,633	130,645,068	112,378
1954	5,616,725	145,476,396	46,656
1959	8,345,001	194,235,908	14,650

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

Most of the county's beef cattle and milk cows are located in the Stillaguamish Valley area around Arlington, Stanwood and East Stanwood and in the lower Snohomish Valley from Snohomish to Marysville. Cattle are also found in the Skykomish Valley from Monroe to Sultan and in the Snoqualmie Valley south of Snohomish. Some cattle are found in the upper valleys of eastern Snohomish County.

Poultry Farming

Poultry farming in Snohomish County has greatly increased since 1920. Farm receipts from the sale of chickens and eggs totaled \$441,710 in 1920. By 1954, the total value of poultry and poultry products sold off farms reached \$2,354,115 in the county. The latest published Census of Agriculture shows the total sales value was \$2,280,383 in 1959. Chickens sold numbered 845,383 in 1954 compared with 1,099,888 in 1959. Farms specializing in poultry, however, decreased in number between 1954 and 1959 from 350 to 151 units. The total number of farms which sold any poultry and/or poultry products dropped from 1,147 to 497 during this period. The current trend is for a decline in small farm flocks and an increase toward larger commercial poultry operations. Among Washington counties, Snohomish ranked fifth in the number of chickens sold and seventh in eggs sold for 1959.

The number of chickens four months and older on farms in Snohomish County in 1959 was 397,604, an increase of about 65 percent from the low of 241,719 in 1949. The trend in chicken numbers since 1949 has been steadily upward. Poultrymen utilize both light-weight and heavy-weight breeds. The White Leghorn is favored for egg production, whereas such breeds as Rhode Island Reds, New Hampshire and others are popular as meat production stock.

Table 30. Chickens, Egg Production and Turkeys
Snohomish County, 1939-1959

Year	Chickens		Egg Production		Turkeys raised (birds)
	Birds 1/	Number of Farms	Number of Farms	Dozens of Eggs	
1939	371,132	4,087	3,731	4,613,853	20,265
1944	396,585	4,793	4,551	3,859,822	43,305
1949	241,719	3,006	1,380	2,760,708 2/	42,678
1954	340,163	2,208	958	3,211,573 2/	68,499
1959	397,604	1,061	419	4,590,051 2/	11,500

1/ 4 months and over. 2/ Eggs sold.

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

Eggs sold off Snohomish County farms in 1959 amounted to 4,590,051 dozen or an increase of 43 percent above the 1954 sales. Farms which reported having sold eggs in 1959 numbered 419 compared with 958 in 1954. The current trend is towards large commercial flocks and specialized poultry farms referred to as "egg factories".

In the past, poultry meat was a by-product of egg production. Now it has become an important farm product in its own right. In 1959--752,211 broilers were sold off 22 Snohomish County farms. Other chickens sold totaled 347,677 and were reported by 275 farms.

Snohomish County's turkey production has declined in recent years. About 11,500 birds were reported in 1959 by 43 farms compared with 68,499 birds by 139 farms in 1954. Turkeys, ducks, geese, other miscellaneous poultry and their eggs sold off Snohomish County farms were valued at \$54,651 in 1959 compared with \$339,891 in 1954.

Table 31. Sheep, Lambs and Wool Shorn
Snohomish County, 1939-1959

Year	Sheep and Lambs		Wool Shorn	
	Number of Farms	Head	Number of Farms	Pounds of Wool
1939	60	390	45	2,419
1944	91	687	35	2,090
1949	103	846	64	2,748
1954	199	1,727	108	7,693
1959	158	2,140	116	13,127

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

Sheep

Sheep raising has been a minor part of Snohomish County livestock farming. Since 1939, Census of Agriculture data have shown a steady increase in county sheep numbers from 390 head on 60 farms to 2,140 head on 158 farms in 1959. Most flocks in the county contained less than 25 head in 1959. Only 23 farms reported flocks of over 25 head. Eighty farms reported the sale of 670 sheep and lambs worth \$8,710 in 1959 while 13,127 pounds of wool were shorn from 1,709 sheep on 116 farms.

Hogs

Hogs have decreased in number in Snohomish County since 1920. The 1920 Census enumerated 6,718 hogs, pigs and sows on Snohomish County farms, whereas in 1959, only 3,028 head were recorded. This reduction in number has been a result of changes in farming practices and a shift from general to more specialized farming. Compared with 1920, fewer farmers raise hogs for on-farm slaughter and home use as fresh and cured meats. The commercial raising of hogs and the use of land for grain feed and the diversion of skim milk and other by-products to produce pork has been found less profitable than dairy and beef cattle raising in the county.

Table 32. Hogs, Horses and Mules
Snohomish County, 1939-1959

Year	Hogs and Pigs		Horses and Mules	
	Number of Farms	Head	Number of Farms	Head
1939	998	3,937	1,694	2,976
1944	1,002	4,267	1,414	2,463
1949	712	3,528	856	1,618
1954	553	2,960	538	1,057
1959	386	3,028	486	1,311

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

Hogs are found scattered throughout most of the major agricultural areas in the county but the largest number is found on farms in the lower Snohomish Valley near Everett and Snohomish. Food wastes from cities, institutions and processing plants are used for feed in areas near urban centers.

Horses and Mules

The number of horses and mules in Snohomish County has declined since 1920 as the need for work and draft animals decreased in the wake of farm mechanization. Most of the present horses are used for pleasure riding and packing in the forest and mountain recreational areas of the county. In 1920 there were 3,825 horses and mules on farms and in 1959 there were only 1,311 head.